

PUBLIC HEARING

APRIL 8, 2015

A public hearing of the Council of the County of Kaua'i was called to order by Mason K. Chock, Vice Chair, Housing & Transportation Committee, on Wednesday, April 8, 2015, at 1:30 p.m., at the Council Chambers, 4396 Rice Street, Suite 201, Historic County Building, Līhu'e, and the presence of the following was noted:

Honorable Mason K. Chock
Honorable Gary L. Hooser
Honorable Ross Kagawa
Honorable Arryl Kaneshiro
Honorable KipuKai Kuali'i
Honorable Mel Rapozo

Excused: Honorable JoAnn A. Yukimura

The Clerk read the notice of the public hearing on the following:

"Bill No. 2580 – A BILL FOR AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 17A, KAUAI COUNTY CODE 1987, AS AMENDED, RELATING TO BUS FARES,"

which was passed on first reading and ordered to print by the Council of the County of Kaua'i on March 11, 2015, and published in The Garden Island newspaper on March 18, 2015.

The following communication was received for the record:

1. Cox, Helen, April 7, 2015

The hearing proceeded as follows:

JADE K. FOUNTAIN-TANIGAWA, Deputy County Clerk: Committee Chair, we have five (5) registered speakers. The first registered speaker is Anne Punohu, followed by John Constantino.

Committee Vice Chair Chock: I know Ms. Punohu has an interest in speaking for an additional three (3) minutes, so I have asked her, because there are some time constraints, if we could skip her and have her go last. Perhaps if no one else wants to go a second round, she can take her six (6) minutes up front.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: Okay. John Constantino, followed by Allison Domenden.

Committee Vice Chair Chock: Mr. Constantino, welcome.

JOHN CONSTANTINO: I am John Constantino and I am the Student Life Coordinator and a Counselor at Kaua'i Community College (KCC) and I am here reading a testimony for the Wai'ale'ale Project. Is anybody familiar with the Wai'ale'ale Project? I will read the testimony: "Dear Members of the Kaua'i County

Council and Mayor Carvalho, thank you for your past support of student success at KCC through your efforts to preserve the bus passes for our students. As a scholarship program, the Wai'ale'ale Project builds access to higher education for the community and strives to resolve barriers to college. The Wai'ale'ale Project has supported students with one hundred percent (100%) of their financial needs. Our project has offered over five hundred (500) full scholarships to students who are adults and youth who would not normally be college bound, including persons from the Native Hawaiian population, students who are first generation to attend college, the unemployed, and persons who are trying to break free from substance abuse and are building new lives after incarceration. The program actually tracks and addresses the various barriers that keep students from enrolling or succeeding in college. With this in mind, the Wai'ale'ale Project has documented that the bus pass has been a huge support these past semesters to allow students to attend and succeed in their courses. Many of the students with financial barriers or who lack the ability to drive rely on this service. The program and our students are in favor of an extension of this arrangement, if it is possible. It should not be underestimated how important transportation is for students, especially those who are economically disadvantaged and who live farther away from campus. In our Wai'ale'ale application, we ask students to identify the barriers that will keep them from attending school. In our most recent cohort of seventy-three (73) students, forty-two (42) responded at fifty-seven percent (57%) that transportation would be a significant barrier. Again, we would like to thank all those who supported our students with this service in the past. In recruiting students to college over the past five (5) years, the recent use of the bus pass at KCC has been one of the most appreciated parts of the program in our program review. In a student survey from one of those years, the responding student said, "I am so grateful to the Wai'ale'ale Project and the County of Kaua'i for supporting me in my education with transportation from Anahola. I ride the bus three (3) days a week, and without the bus pass, would not have thought it possible for me to attend college." We are appreciative of the students in the past who have supported this project and to the insight of the County of Kaua'i, who realize that higher education lifts the entire community and provides opportunity to us all. We thank you for making our project possible and helping our students reach their goals." This is from Parker Evans, the Student Support Coordinator.

Committee Vice Chair Chock: Thank you very much. Next speaker.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: The next speaker is Allison Domenden, followed by Leeona Thompson.

ALLISON DOMENDEN: Good afternoon everyone. I have met with a few of you prior to this public hearing, and within that time, we also have had— First, I would like to say that my name is Allison Napua Domenden. I am the Associated Students of the University of Hawai'i (ASUH) KCC Student Body President and I represent the student body at Kaua'i Community College. Moving forward, within the time that we have met with you folks in regards to the bus pass, we also completed a survey on March 16th, which our St. Patrick's Day event. We had seventy-one (71) students surveyed, and out of those, the students who use the bus to school were one of the questions that we had. They used the Kaua'i Bus to get to school, and out of those students that were surveyed, seventy-one (71) total, thirty-five (35) of them answered yes, while thirty-eight (38) answered no. The other question that stood out for our specific survey was, "Would you have the ability to attend Kaua'i Community College if the bus pass was to be discontinued or offered at a higher rate?" We had thirty-eight (38) students that responded yes,

while thrity (30) responded no, and three (3) who answered maybe or left it unanswered. With this in mind, many of the students who are attend KCC use the bus as a means of transportation. Some of them have families, maybe more than one in their family, which enables them to use the vehicle to attend school and complete their education; while others, maybe their car broke down or they just do not have enough funds to be able to make it to school in a fashionable manner. For me personally, I think the bus pass is a great idea and having it at a reasonably discounted rate really does help us as students to attend school, complete our education, and have that peace of mind knowing that if our car were to break down or we do not have any financial means to pay for gas, we will still be able to attend school knowing that the bus comes at this time and so forth, to be able to attend our classes and complete our degrees as pursued. For me as well, I am a single-parent, so knowing that I have an additional means for transportation to school helps me to be able to attend school and not worry on not completing my requirements for a lot of the scholarships that we have. So being able to attend those classes, do the work, and get good grades instead of standing...

Committee Vice Chair Chock: That is your time.

Ms. Domenden: Sorry. Thank you.

Committee Vice Chair Chock: Thank you.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: The next speaker is Leeona Thompson, followed by Tūtū Māmā Kūhaulua.

LEEONA THOMPSON: Hello. Thank you all for your time. My name is Leeona Thompson. I am the ASUH KCC Student Body Vice President. I am also in strong favor of this. I think it is a wonderful opportunity to continue uplifting students who attend KCC. I know numerous students who ride the bus from Kekaha and back, Monday through Friday, and it literally is their only means of transportation. They could not be here today, maybe because of transportation problems, but I think it is just a wonderful opportunity for our County to help out our institutions of academia here on the island. Thank you.

Committee Vice Chair Chock: Thank you. Next speaker.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: The next speaker is Tūtū Māmā Kūhaulua, followed by Felicia Cowden.

TŪTŪ MĀMĀ KŪHAULUA: *Aloha mai kākou.* I am Tūtū Māmā. I am the Senator At-Large for the Hawaiian community at KCC, and yes, I am a junior in college because I was busy raising my seven (7) kids and eighteen (18) grandkids, and married for thirty-two (32) years, and then I got sick and died, and came back; a few things happened, but God is good, so he gave me the opportunity to come to college. Wai'ale'ale gifted me to come through my disabilities though, and I was able to ride the "kupuna bus." I call it the "kupuna bus" because I talk to the *kūpuna*, but it is the paratransit. That is why I am here. I fall asleep if I drive, so I have to ride in the paratransit from a seat where I do not have a wheel in front of me. It is very much a godsend because I see all the *keiki*...well, I know they are adults now, but they come and go from the west side; a lot of the students that I see, mostly the *kānaka* students from the west side. I do not see the Hanalei side too much, but the ones that I converse with in the Hawaiian classes, it is the only way they are going to come to school. Without it, they say "no need" because if you have

all of these students not riding the bus, you have them trying to come with cars and you would have cars all the way down to Kukui Grove or someplace by Kilohana or someplace, and it just does not make sense. We just ask that you folks *kōkua* a little bit because these guys will come out on their own eventually. Hopefully they get *ma'a* to the idea of riding the bus. It is a training in progress and I think it is *maika'i* because I remember the days when it was twenty-five cents (\$0.25) in the Volkswagen bus from Smith's. That was *maika'i*. I would just like to thank you for all that you are doing. It is awesome. Trying to represent all the students from KCC is really cool because I see my kids' classmates and they actually listen. I write on the chalkboard and ask how they feel, and they give their *mana'o*. They call me "aunty" or "*tūtū*" or whatever and it is cool because they give from their heart. They answer you, not with disrespect, how they really feel and I would just like to pass it on to you as I represent ASUH at KCC. But also *nā haumana ma KCC*. I would like to present this as official evidence for you, *ka leka mahalo kekahi mea mai mākou iā 'oukou. Mahalo.*

Committee Vice Chair Chock: *Mahalo nui.*

FELICIA COWDEN: Hi. I am Felicia Cowden and I will make mine very simple. We have had lots of really good points that I am in agreement with. It keeps the traffic off the road and encourages students really at any age to be able to use this bus. I think that when it is imbedded in their card, it teaches them a really good habit. The other important thing I think it teaches them is that we care about them and it is an *aloha* that I feel like we owe our students and our young people, and one little more bump to get them into college and to be able to have more opportunities. It is good for all of Kaua'i. As a person who is not a student and who is not at the school, I say, "Yay yes." It is really good and I am in full support. Thank you.

Committee Vice Chair Chock: Thank you.

Ms. Fountain-Tanigawa: The last speaker is Anne Punohu.

ANNE PUNOHU: There is a folder, and in this folder are pictures of my daughter. I brought it because maybe some of you maybe did not know her. My name is Anne Punohu. Some of you have known her since she was a baby and some of you have watched her grow in these Council Chambers coming with me. Some of you have been part of programs that helped her very much. This is my favorite picture of my daughter and the one we had at her funeral. So why am I talking about this? Shanarae Kaulananāpuaikaikamaolinō Donovan was born February 19, 1992, the year of the hurricane. She was six (6) months when 'Iniki hit. She was named by Aunty (inaudible) Santos of Hanalei. She lived until eighteen and a half (18.5) years of age and died in August 14, 2010. Prior to that, she did many things in her life. You will see a picture of a cane spider giving birth. She was going to attend Cornell University and come home and be the caretaker of these spiders of Kaua'i, thanks to Leadership Kaua'i who hooked her up with a scientist who was involved with the project. Kaulana fell in love with insects, bugs, and spiders and after she died, and I got the nerve to clean her room up, there were spiders everywhere, which I was absolutely terrified. That was a little present that Kaulana left me. Also, too, she was in the Vagina Monologues, which we were in that together, but she was on the Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee, along with other great KCC students, Rell and Ian, and they are at the end of that packet, so you can see the original student council that supported this. Kaulana came home one day and said, "Mom, I was at the Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee and I

decided...remember how hard it was for you to drive us around to KCC and...I think the bus should be for free for the students and I am going to get it to happen.” I looked at Kaulana with my years of sitting in front of you and all the other meetings and I said, “Kaulana, that is a great idea. But a little reality check—I do not think that is going to happen.” She said, “Mom, I am going to make it happen.” I said, “Kaulana, if anyone can do it, you can do it.” Kaulana conceived this idea, worked on the project, and was trying to get it off the ground, and then she passed away. In the meantime, Ian and Rell and the original student council and her *hānai* uncle, John Constantino, who has known her since she was born...a little after she was born when she was a baby...took the charge. I went to talk to some of the student councils and reminded them who Kaulana was and what her dream and goal was, which was for the kids to be able to attend KCC for free with the bus. I know it was for a little while. Then they went through this whole process. What an amazing collaborative effort between the Mayor’s Office, this County Council, UH, and the students. There is a way that people can get together, agree on something, and from one student who has passed on in kind of a bad way, to pass it on to each successor generation of new KCC student councilmembers who then get involved in the process.

Committee Vice Chair Chock: Hold on one second. I just have to check with the process and make sure that no one else wants to testify at this time.

Ms. Punohu: I think there were more students that have not testified.

Committee Vice Chair Chock: Hold on, let me ask. If not, I will let you continue with your additional three (3) minutes. You are on a roll, so please continue. Thank you.

Ms. Punohu: I just want to thank the students because if it were not for the students—it is a student that started this and it is the students that are going to continue it. So I hope that in the honoring of the line of continuum here, some good comes out of something really horrific. For me as her parent, it is closure for me and it is a way to make sure that Kaulana’s memory stays alive and the best way for that is for the projects that she believed in and the things that she really wanted to have happen, to happen, and continue. I just want to say as her mother that I want to thank everybody involved. I hope that percentages, numbers, juggling, and things like that do not prevent us from the core value, which is first of all to keep all of this good stuff rolling and to show everyone that everybody can cooperate together, to teach these students that the process does work, to also teach students that there is always a better way, that tomorrow always gets better, and that suicide is not the answer, but if we can learn from it and keep one person’s dream alive and keep it going, that that means our whole future will be better. That is all I have to say today. On behalf of Kaulana, I just want to say that I know my daughter would be over the moon, freaked out, happy, and ecstatic to see everybody here today and supporting this. I want to thank everybody, especially John Constantino, who has never stopped getting these kids on board, teaching what was going on, and keeping them going on the project. I just want to say *mahalo* to everyone and please continue to fund this great thing. *Mahalo*.

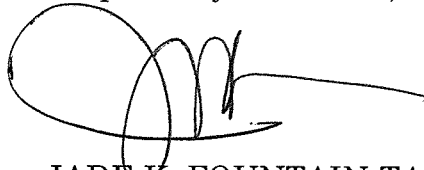
Committee Vice Chair Chock: Thank you. Would anyone else like to testify? Please come up.

BRYAN GERALD: Bryan Gerald for the record, Senator of Business Education with Kaua'i Community College. I will keep this brief. I am in support of this because I know how fragile the system is at community colleges and what have you, but I know with Kaua'i Community College, it is a vital component to see that the needs of the community college is met, hand in hand with the community. I believe this is a structure that not only sustains Kaua'i Community College students that are absent from vehicles and what have you, but that they have a right to get to school, a right of passage, and I believe this component has worked. It has been tried and tested, so I think for the most part moving forward, this is a progressive move and staying with this program for Kaua'i Community College. Thank you for your time. I appreciate it.

Committee Vice Chair Chock: Thank you. If there is no one else, this concludes our public hearing on Bill No. 2580.

There being no further testimony on this matter, the public hearing adjourned at 1:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jade K. Fountain-Tanigawa', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

JADE K. FOUNTAIN-TANIGAWA
Deputy County Clerk

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